



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

About...Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)

What is HPS?

HPS refers to an acute lung disease caused by the Sin Nombre virus. The disease was first found in the Four Corners area (where borders of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado join) in 1993. Indiana has had 2 cases of HPS since 1993. There are several other viruses that cause similar disease in the United States and in South America.

How is HPS spread?

The reservoir of Sin Nombre virus is the deer mouse. Cotton rats, rice rats, and white footed mice each carry a virus that can cause HPS. While the rodents are not ill, they can shed the virus in their saliva, droppings, and urine. Spread to people occurs when:

- People sweep or clean areas where rodent urine, droppings, and saliva are present and small droplets are inhaled; and
- When items with rodent urine, droppings, or saliva are handled and then hands touch the nose or mouth before washing.

How do I know if I have HPS?

You cannot tell without seeing a doctor. Your doctor will review your symptoms, give you a physical exam, and might order chest x-rays and lab testing.

What are the symptoms of HPS?

People with HPS have fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, chills, nausea, stomach pain, fever, rapid breathing, cough, rapid heartbeat, and sometimes low blood pressure. Symptoms appear about 1-5 weeks after exposure.

How is HPS treated?

There is no direct treatment for HPS. Antibiotics are not effective. Supportive care in hospitals is often used until the body's immune system overcomes the infection.

How is HPS prevented?

HPS is prevented by taking steps to reduce exposure to rodent urine, droppings, and saliva. Steps that can be taken include:

1. Clean up around the outside of your home to remove shelter and breeding sites for rodents.
2. Rodent proof your house, garage, and other out buildings. Keep bird and pet food covered to prevent their use as food by rodents. Clean up spills at once. Keep all foods and trash in rodent proof containers. Seal all holes ¼ inch or larger with wire screens or other rodent proof material.
3. If you see rodent droppings or urine, clean the area with a "wet technique". Use a household disinfectant on the surfaces prior to trying to sweep or mop the area. Set rodent traps. Use EPA approved rodent poisons and always follow label directions.
4. Be sure to wash hands after you handle or clean areas where rodents have been. Wear a mask when you sweep these areas.
5. Increase ventilation in areas where there are rodents before cleaning. This is helpful to reduce the amount of virus present and will reduce the risk of spread.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus/index.html>

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